1:Srinivas E-5 (1940-42)1952 AW5 Coorg AW5

villagers on a ritual occasion. If the institution of caste has a tendency to lay stress on 'horizontal unity', the harvest festival tends to counterpoise it by stressing the unity of the village.

VI

The nuclear unit of Coorg society is the *okka* or patrilineal joint family, and only the male members of an *okka* have any rights in the ancestral estate. Women born in the *okka* leave it on marriage, while the women who come into it by marriage have extremely limited rights in the ancestral estate. No woman may be head of an *okka*. A Coorg proverb says, 'a woman may not be the head of an *okka*, and a bitch may not be given a share of the game it helps to kill in a hunt'.[1]

Only sons can continue the *okka*. But when there are no sons, a daughter, or widow of a dead son is married in either the *okka parijé* or *makka parijé* way (see pp. 129–30), which has the effect of granting the children of either form of union membership of their mother's natal *okka*. If it is not possible to perpetuate the *okka* in either of these ways, a boy from another *okka* is adopted.

There is a sexual division of labour, men generally doing the work outside the house while women do the work inside. The tasks done by men are in a vague way regarded as superior to those done by women. The men cultivate or supervise the cultivation of land by low-caste labourers. However, agriculture is not, and has never been, their sole occupation. The army has always attracted Coorgs, and nowadays educated Coorgs are to be found in every profession.

Village-assemblies and *nāḍ*-assemblies were formerly vigorous institutions and only men normally took part in them. The men went in annual caravans to Malabar, in the dry season, to sell their surplus rice and buy salt, jaggery, coconut, coconut oil, tobacco, and fish. They also had the privilege and duty of conducting the elaborate festivals of village-deities and calendar festivals such as the harvest festival.

Coorg women's activities are on the whole confined to the house. They cook food for the twenty or thirty members of the *okka*. They look after the children and servants, the storing of food, the raising of pig and fowl, and so on. The younger women have to bring

[1] Even today at a collective hunt bitches are not entitled to any share in the meat of the hunted animal, while each of the dogs is given a share.

1:Srinivas E-5 (1940-42)1952 AW5 Coorg AW5

conjugal *okka* and reverts to her natal *okka*. Such reversion is automatic and not conditional upon the unanimous consent of the members of her natal *okka*. But if a woman has been divorced for a grave offence, her natal *okka* might decide to have nothing to do with her.

4. Children of unsanctioned unions are referred to as *mai kaṇat makka* and they do not enjoy membership of their father's *okka* as legitimate children do. In fact, they are not members of any *okka*. Usually, however, elders bring pressure on the lover's kindred to the grant of membership for the children in the lover's *okka*. But if this is impossible, the children are made members of their mother's natal *okka*.

If the children of an unsanctioned union and their mother are given membership in the lover's *okka* while both the woman and her lover are still alive it is called *bendu* (relative) *parijé*. If, however, the father dies before the children and their mother have been given *sammanda* in his *okka*, then the elders try to see that *sammanda* is given at least before the corpse is disposed of. Such a belated granting of membership is called *kuṭṭa* (funeral pyre) *parijé*. This enables the widow to take part in the funeral rites.

5. A boy from outside is adopted when there are no agnatic descendants in an *okka*. *Sammanda* is performed, giving the boy in question membership of the heirless *okka*.

6. Adoption is not, however, necessary if there is an unmarried girl (or even the widow of a dead member) in the *okka* without an heir. The girl is then married according to the custom of *okka parijé* by which the children of the marriage become members of their mother's natal *okka*. The man himself ceases to be a member of his natal *okka* and becomes instead a member of his wife's natal *okka*.

The institution of *makka* (children) *parijé* is resorted to when it is impossible to find a man willing to leave his natal *okka* and become a member of the heirless *okka*. *Makka parijé* is a sanctioned union between the daughter of the heirless *okka* and a man who, while remaining a member of his natal *okka* and performing his duties by it, also agrees to raise up seed for the heirless *okka*. He usually stays in his natal home and visits his *makka parijé* 'wife' only occasionally. The children of this alliance are members of their mother's *okka*. It is usual for the *makka parijé* 'husband' to have a wife married to him in the normal way and living with him in his natal home. The children of the latter union, unlike the children of

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responsibility of Mother Kāvēri and the ancestors of Muthamma's *okka* to see that the couple have sons, and prosper'.

It is essential to note that in a *makka parijé*[1] union the husband does not acquire any rights in the *makka parijé* wife's house, except the right to food and clothing during his stay there.

Adoption is resorted to only when there is neither an agnatic male descendant nor an unmarried girl in the *okka*. Formerly, during the time of the Lingāyaṭ Rājas, the ruler's permission was necessary for an adoption, and for an *okka parijé* or *makka parijé* union. This was because these devices could be used to shut out a distant agnatic male relative. But it is certain that the local elders would have tried to prevent an adoption to defraud a distant agnatic kinsman.

Two of the three devices for ensuring the continuity of an *okka* threatened with extinction because of the lack of agnatic descendants involve the granting of membership to an outside male, while the third does not. But whether membership of the *okka* is granted or not, each of the three customary devices is enveloped in ritual and involves the gathering together of the concerned relatives, family friends, and villagers. The legal and social consequences of each device are made clear at a solemn ritual occasion held in the sacred ancestral house of the *okka* whose continuity is threatened.

X

The implications of marriage, its rights and duties, are made clear at the performance of *sammanda* ritual. Most of the rites performed subsequent to *sammanda* dramatize the transfer of the girl from her natal *okka* to her conjugal *okka*.

To begin with, the groom goes to the bride sitting alone in the kitchen of her natal house, performs *mūrta* to her, and presents her with a purse containing coins (*chila paṇa*). The groom ties the purse to the frontal breast-knot of the bride's *sari*, but before doing so he unties the purse presented earlier by the mother. Thus the purse presented by the groom replaces the purse presented by the bride's mother. The newly created affinal bond replaces the uterine bond. In a patrilocal and patrilineal society,

[1] *Makka parijé* is not restricted to unmarried girls only. For instance, a widow might be called upon to raise up seed for her conjugal *okka* by entering into a *makka parijé* alliance.

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Serial No.	*Occasion*	*Subject of the rights*	*Where the subject had rights originally*	*Where now given*	*Remarks*
6 (contd.)					
	(*c*) Adoption.	The boy to be adopted.	In his natal *okka*.	In the adoptive *okka*.	Only when there are no agnatically-related males may a stranger be adopted to continue the *okka* threatened with extinction owing to lack of heirs. The adoptive son loses his membership of his natal *okka* and becomes a member of his adoptive *okka*. The consent of all the adult males of the natal *onka* of the adoptive son, and the consent of the caste-elders is necessary for the adoption to be valid.

596 generally well guarded in the use of proper expressions in their talk with the young. The educated men of the present day exercise a potent influence for good in the normal conversation, and show due respect to their [607] brother's wife with whom no familiarity is allowed. There is a tendency [173] at present among the discontented members to break up the ancestral family [578] by a division of the family property among the members.

Property and Disposal

423 The property of the Coorgs consists chiefly of the ancestral house
425 and the land belonging to it which under the Rajas was held on a feudal
177 tenure and on a light assessment termed *jamma bhumi* or birthright land, because it was inalienably vested in the family or house, and the British Government confirmed the settlement. Additional land was taken up by them on the *sagu* tenure, but, in course of time, Government allowed to some extent such *sagu* land to be converted into *jamma* land. Other land held as jagir was granted for certain Government service as *umbli* land on a light assessment. During the last thirty years, many houses have opened out coffee plantations on their own or Govern-
434 ment land, or rented cardamom jungles. Thus the actual wealth of the
421 Coorgs consists of landed property and their prosperity depends on the
596 exertions and means of cultivation; but imprudent enterprises and un-
[554] expected reverses have caused much embarrassment. Formerly, all the members of a Coorg house lived together in the ancestral home or in some outfarm, *koppu*, neither of which could be alienated nor subdivided among the members of the family. All of them worked for the common good under the management of the *yajamana* or *korakara*, and had their subsistence on the proceeds. Any surplus on the annual reckoning became
[433] the property of the house for providing incidental expenditure on the occasion of marriages, funerals, and other ceremonies, as also for the purchase of new land in the interest of the family. If, however, an individual member by becoming a salaried officer or by coming into possession of money through marriage, was enabled to enter upon private speculation without any aid from the ancestral house, any property or acquirements thus made became his private property and were left at his
[591] own disposal by gift or will. Many young men have thus become separated from the ancestral house and established a new homestead, and as
[182] long as they contributed to the expenses of the former, they maintained their share in the proceeds. This is the proper mode of setting up a new house. Disintegration is now setting in, and some try to break up the ancestral houses by a division of the landed property among the members.

Adoption

● 597 The right of adoption is given to every Coorg house in the absence of male issue, or by an unmarried man or woman or widower in order to secure the inheritance of personal property or rights.

4: Richter M, G-5 (ca. 1856-1870) 1870 AW5 Coorg AW5

429 his patrimony, until he attains his majority, which ranges
428 from 16 to 20 years, according to the maturity of judgment
[884] shewn by the individual, when he puts his ward in possession of it, and renders him an account of receipts and disbursements during the period of his nonage.

428 If the deceased has left no children, the widow adopts a
• 597 child of her relations, if procurable, or otherwise of her tribe, and he succeeds to the property on his attainment of the proper age, provided he has been adopted formally and according to the usage of the clan.

c. Wedding and married life.

582
[178] The marriage-customs of the present day present a curious mixture of old and new rites, fashions and notions.

In ancient times, it would seem, the marriage festivities had a peculiarly communal character. On some great day a family would call together the whole gráma (village), that is all the families of one of the rice-valleys, girt with farm-
[304] houses, to a feast. The youths would have their ears pierced
[335] by the carpenters for earrings, and the maidens had rice
[574] strewn upon their heads. This was in those days called the marriage feast. The whole community feasted together, and the young people were now at liberty to go in search of husbands and wives.

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[171] In the low country the piercing of the ear is generally performed by the goldsmith, except in out-of-the-way places, where a goldsmith is not to be found. In such a case another branch of the trade-fraternity, smith or carpenter, may act for
[335] the brother-goldsmith. In Coorg the carpenter has the exclu-
sive privilege of piercing the ears for ornaments.

[582] The girls have their ears pierced in early childhood. When they come of age, the ceremony of putting on their heads some corns of rice is a token of their being free to marry.